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## UNIT NARRATIVE



When Mexico became independent of Spain in 1821, the new nation faced daunting challenges: the country was deeply in debt, Spain had promised to reconquer the territory, and much of Mexico had been devastated by the War for Independence. One of the most alarming problems that Mexico inherited from Spain was their remarkably weak presence in Texas, since so few Spaniards – now Mexicans – lived in the region.

As such, Mexico endorsed a plan by Tejanos (Mexicans native to Texas) to invite Anglo-Americans to settle in Texas. The hope was that these American farmers would become Anglo-Mexicans, whose new settlements would bring more population, stability, and economic development to the region. These Americans, in turn, were interested in Texas because Mexico's government offered them vast swaths of land, far more than they could ever hope to buy in the United States. Thousands of Americans, as a result, began moving during the 1820s into eastern Texas, where they established farms and plantations that mostly grew cotton.

For a variety of reasons, disputes emerged during the late 1820s and early 1830s that put Texans (Anglos and Tejanos) in conflict with various levels of Mexico's government. Both Anglos and Tejanos, for example, supported the importation of enslaved African Americans to serve as the labor system driving Anglo cotton farms in Texas, which put them at odds with leaders from other parts of Mexico who wanted to outlaw slavery altogether. Both Anglos and Tejanos also resented that Texas had been attached to the nearby state of Coahuila and petitioned unsuccessfully to be granted permission to be their own state. And as the Anglo population grew dramatically during the late 1820s and early 1830s, Mexico City began trying to assert more control over Texas, leading to disputes (and some armed fights) in the region.

Through it all, Tejanos and Anglos in Texas both tended to be strong supporters of "federalism" under Mexico's Constitution of 1824, which promised that states in Mexico could pass their own laws based on local needs. When a group of leaders in Mexico City, with Santa Anna at the helm, overthrew the Constitution of 1824, alarmed Tejanos and Anglos openly began resisting the new "centralist" government of Mexico.

This unit is adapted from the Texas History for Teacher Curriculum. For additional resources, check out: Texas History for Teachers.

## CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards **taught** and **assessed** in this unit.

Mexican National Era: Colonization and the Empresario System		Connected Knowledge and Skills 7.1, 7.10, 7.18
<b>7.2 History.</b> The student understands how individuals, events, and issues through the Mexican National Era shaped the history of Texas.		
Readiness Standards	Supporting Standards	
7.1(A)^ identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including ... Mexican National ...	7.2(D)	identify the individuals, issues, and events related to Mexico becoming an independent nation and its impact on Texas, including Father Miguel Hidalgo, Texas involvement in the fight for independence, José Gutiérrez de Lara, the Battle of Medina, the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824, the merger of Texas and Coahuila as a state, the State Colonization Law of 1825, and slavery
7.2(F) contrast Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo purposes for and methods of settlement in Texas	7.2(E)	identify the contributions of significant individuals, including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, Erasmo Seguin, Martín De León, and Green DeWitt, during the Mexican settlement of Texas
7.18(B)^ describe how people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture	7.8(A)^	locate and compare the Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, and Coastal Plains regions
	7.10(A)*	identify why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled

## UNDERSTANDINGS AND QUESTIONS

### Key Understandings

- Mexico gained independence from Spain and inherited the challenge of governing a vast and diverse territory, including Texas.**  
Following the end of Spanish rule in 1821, Mexico faced political instability, regional unrest, and economic struggles. These national challenges shaped policy decisions and influenced how Texas was governed during the Mexican National Era.
- The Empresario System was designed to encourage immigration and development in Texas.**  
Mexico promoted settlement in Texas through land grants to empresarios and settlers, particularly from the United States. This system brought new populations into Texas and changed the region's demographics, economy, and society.
- Tejanos, Mexicans, and Anglos had different motivations for supporting the colonization of Texas.**  
While Mexican leaders aimed to develop and control Texas, Anglo settlers sought opportunity and land, and Tejanos often acted as intermediaries. These differing perspectives sometimes aligned but also led to tension and misunderstandings.

**4. Events during the Mexican National Era increased tensions between Texas and the Mexican government.**

A series of political, social, and military events—including the Law of April 6, 1830 and the abolition of the Constitution of 1824—created conflict and distrust between settlers in Texas and Mexican leaders, laying the groundwork for revolution.

**5. Primary sources and firsthand accounts reveal growing political unrest and resistance in Texas.**

Newspapers, speeches, and writings from the period show how Texans responded to Mexican political changes, including centralization of power. These perspectives help us understand the path toward the Texas Revolution.

### Key Questions

◆ **Why did Mexico invite settlers from the United States into Texas?**

↳ Encourages students to explore Mexico's political and economic goals after independence and the rationale behind the Empresario System.

◆ **What motivated different groups—Mexicans, Tejanos, and Anglos—to support settlement in Texas?**

↳ Promotes analysis of the varied goals and interests that shaped colonization during the Mexican National Era.

◆ **How did events in Mexico and the United States affect life in Texas?**

↳ Guides students to examine the cause-and-effect relationships between national instability, immigration policy, and rising tensions.

◆ **What factors contributed to growing unrest and conflict in Texas during the Mexican National Era?**

↳ Supports critical thinking about how laws, leadership changes, and cultural differences led to distrust and resistance.

◆ **Whose perspectives do we see in this era—and whose are missing?**

↳ Invites students to reflect on the historical narrative and consider whose voices shaped the story and whose were excluded.

